Please amend the above-identified patent application, without prejudice, as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

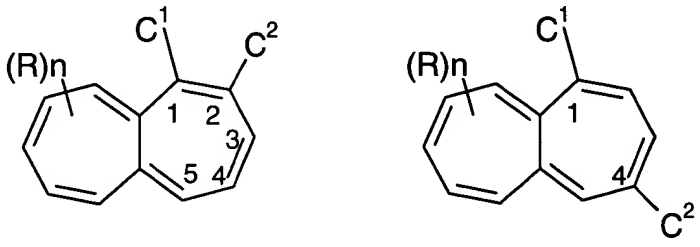
Cancel claim 16.

Amend claims 17-19, 23 and 24 as follows:

17. (Amended) [4n]-heptalenes according to claim 26, whereby, C^1 and C^2 represent independently from each other a hydrogen atom, a methyl group, a phenyl group, an ethyl ester group, a methyl ester group, a (E)-PhCH=CH-group, a (E)-4-$MeOC_6H_4CH$=CH-group, a (E)-4-ClC_6H_4CH=CH-group, a 4-$MeOC_6H_4$-group, a -CH=CH-CH=CH-C_6H_5 group, a -CH=CH-$C_6H_4NO_2$-4 group, a -CH=CH-C_6H_4OMe-4 group, with the proviso that a heptalene being substituted by a methyl ester group at the position 1, a -CH=CH-CH=CH-C_6H_5 group at the positions 2 and 5, an isopropyl group at the position 7 and a methyl group at the position 10 is excluded.

18. (Amended) [4n]-heptalenes according to claim 26, whereby said further substituents R are selected from the group comprising substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-alkyl groups or photoactive diazo-containing groups, like azobenzene.

19. (Amended 2x) Method for the preparation of substituted heptalenes of the formula (I) or (II), according to claim 26



(I) (II)

whereby C^1, C^2, R and n are as above defined, comprising the steps of

(a) obtaining a heptalene-dicarboxylate by a reaction

of a correspondingly substituted azulene with acetylenedicarboxylate, and optionally

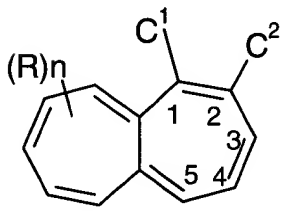
(b) transforming at least one carboxylic group or another substituent that was entered by the preliminary Diels-Alder reaction into the desired conjugated substituent having an extended π-electron system.

23. (Amended) An optical storage device comprising at least one substituted [4n]-annulene according to claim 26.

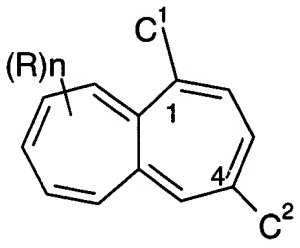
24. (Amended) A non-linear optical device comprising at least one substituted [4n]-annulene according to claim 26.

Insert new claims 26 and 27 as follows:

26. (new) Substituted [4n]-heptalenes of the general formula (I) or (II) being optically and/or thermally switchable, based on thermal or photochemical double-bond shifts (DBS),



(I)



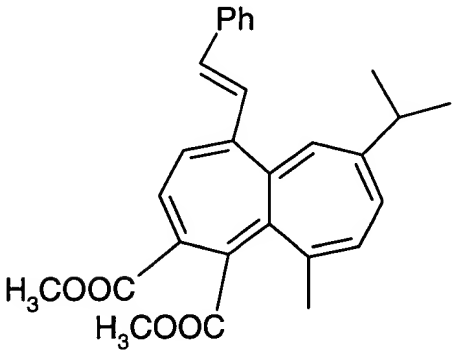
(II)

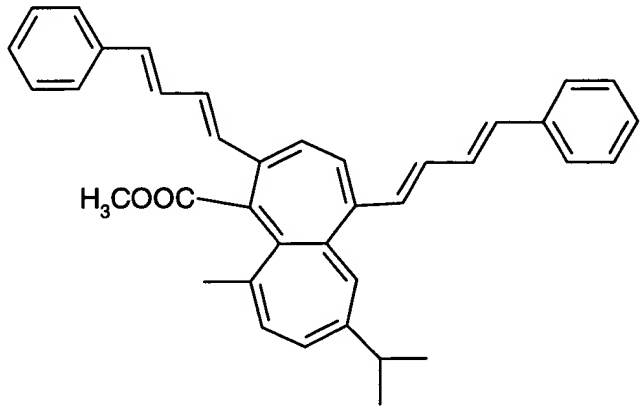
whereby C^1 and C^2 represent independently from each other a hydrogen atom, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-alkyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-alkoxy group, a substituted or unsubstituted aryl-C_1-C_{12}-alkyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-alkenyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-conjugated alkenyl group, a substituted or unsubstituted C_1-C_{12}-alkinyl group, a substituted or an unsubstituted phenyl group, a substituted or an unsubstituted heterocyclic group, a cyano group, a nitro group, a thiocyanate group, a C_1-C_{12}-ester group being optionally polymerisable with copolymers, with the proviso that at least one of said substituents C^1 and C^2 contains an extended conjugated π-electron system which is in conjugation with the π-electron system of the heptalene core, and

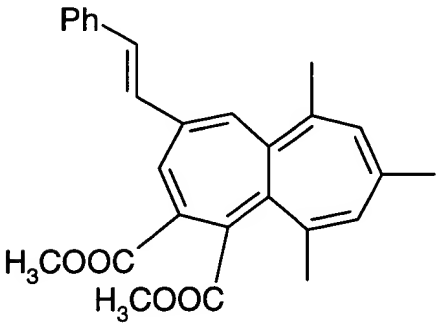
whereby said [4n]-heptalenes can comprise at least one further substituent R being selected from the above indicated groups with n being 0-8,

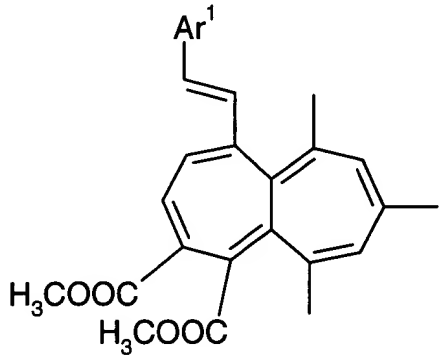
provided that if one of the at least one further substituents R is an isopropyl group at the position 9 of the heptalene ring, the substituent at the position 6 must not be a methyl group, and

with the proviso that heptalenes having the following substituents including their valence isomers are excluded:

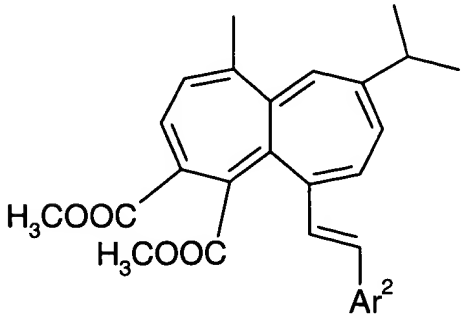








wherein Ar^1 is phenyl, 4-chloro phenyl or 4-methoxy phenyl, and



,wherein Ar^2 is phenyl or 4-methoxy phenyl.

27. (new) Substituted [4n]-annulenes according to claim 16, wherein at least one of the groups C^1, C^2 or R is a group -COO-$(CH_2)_n$OH, a group -COO-$(CH_2)_n$OOC-$C(CH_3)=CH_2$ or a group -COO-$(CH_2)_nC_6H_4$-4-$CH=CH_2$ wherein $n \geq 2$.